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ABSTRACT

Written primarily from the teachers' viewpoint, this review of the history and causes of teacher militancy in the United States traces the emergence of unionism and the collective bargaining movement among teachers. The author briefly discusses causes of militancy, relevant laws and court decisions, the impact of the economy on the teachers' movement, teacher conservatism, federal school financing, recent increases in the number of teachers, public opinion and its impact on teachers, and political action by teachers. He concludes that teacher militancy and its mechanism for expression, collective bargaining, are firmly ensconced in the teaching profession because of the effectiveness of professional organizations, such as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. (Author/DS)

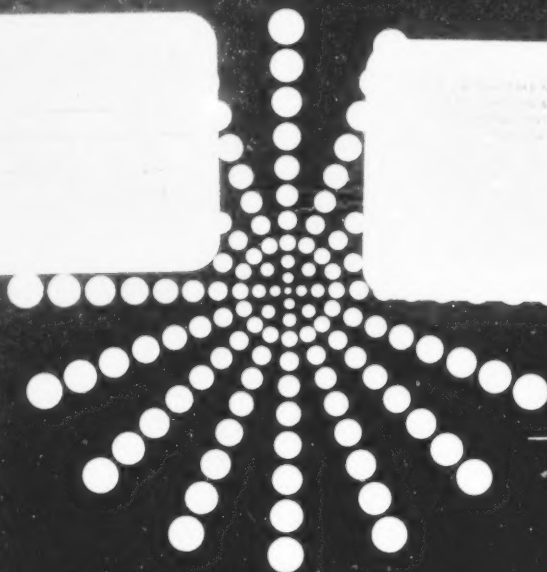
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The Future of Teacher Power in America

Marshall O. Donley, Jr.

FASTBACK 98



PHI DELTA KAPPA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

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Marshall O. Donley, Jr., is editor of the National Education Association's newspaper, the *NEA Reporter*. He has written extensively about teachers and their organizations, much of the writing based on his direct experiences with teacher organizations in the U.S. and abroad. His Ph.D. thesis dealt with the history of U.S. teacher organizations; it was published in 1976, in an updated and much revised form, by the Indiana University Press in cooperation with Phi Delta Kappa (*Power to the Teacher: How America's Educators Became Militant*).

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The Future of Teacher Power in America

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Introduction

The winter of 1976-77 was one of the coldest in years. Yet in the midst of the snow and wind, teachers were on picket lines in several states.

In Racine, Wisconsin, wrapped in ski parkas and heavily booted, nearly 1,000 teachers tramped the sidewalks outside school buildings and school board offices. The Racine teachers had been without a contract for more than two years; they decided finally that, cold winter or no, they would stay out of their classrooms until the school board agreed to put their rights in writing.

The impasse lasted a month and a half. The school board had hundreds of teachers arrested; the teachers association went to court to charge the board with unfair labor practices; the community refused to permit the nonworking teachers to get food stamps, so some teachers lived on contributions from other Wisconsin teachers. The Wisconsin Education Association Council and the National Education Association sent staff to help, provided interest-free loans for the strikers, and organized fund drives for the Racine teachers.

In mid-March the teachers won their contract and went back to work.

It was just one more instance of teacher militancy in the 1970s, but the Racine action would have shocked teachers and their communities at an earlier time in America's history. From the beginnings of the Republic, teachers were quiescent, modest, and meek. They were expected to act like servants. Their behavior in school and out was both prescribed and proscribed by the community. At different

times and places, special rules regarding smoking, drinking, court-
ing, and church-going were strictly enforced, even to the point of
limiting teachers' rights to leave town without permission. Class-
rooms were entered regularly by the town fathers, who themselves
tested pupils to see if they were learning. In the South, teachers were
sometimes actually slaves—literate blacks assigned the task of
imparting the ABCs to the children of the plantation.

Teachers who could not endure the restraints generally moved
on to other jobs; teaching was, for many, a starting point for other
professions, a way to earn a few dollars until other and better pros-
pects were found. The dollars were indeed few. Throughout most of
American history, teachers were earning just about enough to get by
on. Between 1841 and the Civil War, for example, the wages of male
teachers ranged from \$4.15 to \$6.30 weekly in rural areas, from \$11.93
to \$18.07 in the cities. Female teachers got less.

Teachers were not thought to deserve more money; some of
them didn't even hope for more. In the words of a normal school
teacher in 1839, "It is not to be expected that teaching will ever
become a *lucrative* position."

This servant status began to change only when teachers began to
organize. They learned the lesson that there is strength in unity. As
one early Illinois teachers society noted, "Group petitions got a
readier response from school boards than did the individual requests
from the teachers." What the lone schoolmaster could not do, a
union of educators could attempt.

The Earliest Teachers Organizations

The nation's first teachers association, the Society of Associated Teachers of New York City, was established in 1794. Five years later the School Association of the County of Middlesex, Connecticut, was founded. The Associated Instructors of Youth in the Town of Boston and Its Vicinity survived a few years following 1812. Countywide and citywide groups were set up in many states, and 30 state teachers associations were formed between 1840 and 1861.

When a national teachers group was formed in 1857, the invitation called on all "practical teachers" to assemble in Philadelphia for "the purpose of organizing a National Teachers Association." The invitations were mailed not to teachers, however, but to the presidents of the state education associations, 10 of whom accepted. Forty-three educators attended the organizing meeting, but few of them were classroom teachers. Total membership in the national group never topped 300 until the 1870s. At that time the organization merged with the National Association of School Superintendents and the American Normal School Association, both of which became departments of what was then called the National Educational Association.

The birth of these groups was attended by a kind of schizophrenia that has continued into the present. From the first, educators were torn between their desires to promote and improve public education and their determination to better their own conditions. In view of their genteel respectability, they could not very well strive only for the latter. Thus, teachers groups have been strained and occasionally torn apart by members' conflicting needs to serve society and to serve themselves.

"Associated effort" to some teachers meant labor unions. In 1897 the Chicago Teachers Federation was formed. It did not affiliate with the American Federation of Labor, however, so the honor of becoming the first bona fide teacher labor union went to teachers in San Antonio, Texas. They joined the AFL on September 29, 1902. Although the Chicago teachers "went labor" later the same year, they did not join the AFL, but did affiliate with the city labor council.

A national union of teachers, affiliated with the AFL, was set up on May 9, 1916, when several Chicago teachers unions and one in Gary, Indiana, formed the American Federation of Teachers.

Structure but Not Much Function

By the time of the First World War teachers had a mechanism for action, a structure upon which they could build their militancy. That mechanism—a national association of teachers, a national teachers union, state and local teachers associations, and local teachers unions—remained ineffective, however. For one thing, most teachers were not members. The National Education Association enrolled 2,332 educators in 1900. The number had grown to 6,909 by 1910, but even this represented but 1.3% of the nation's teaching force. State associations did better. They drew 14% of employed teachers in their states in 1907, 34% by 1916. Teachers union membership was smaller.

Further, these nascent groups did little for teachers. In many cases, they were dominated by superintendents and college professors; they blocked membership for women; they tiptoed around important issues such as salaries and spent much of their time on "professional" matters. In the words of one early member, "There was, at the start, too much *why*, not enough *what*, and hardly any *how* at all. Even the most practical schoolmen, when asked to prepare addresses, suffered an attack of pedantry and soared to cloudland."

Slowly, teachers organizations began to face some of the problems of teachers. In 1905 the NEA published its first salary study; by 1915 the association was passing resolutions calling for higher teacher salaries and greater financial security for teachers. State education associations claimed lobbying victories for minimum salary laws, tenure provisions, and pension plans. Codes of ethics for educators were promulgated, and a few associations explored the

possibility of legal action on behalf of members who were fired without due process or cause.

Following World War I teachers began to join their associations in great numbers. In 1917 NEA membership was 8,466; by 1927 it had grown to 141,212; by World War II it topped 200,000. State teachers associations flourished in nearly every state. American Federation of Teachers membership rose to 32,000 by 1939.

Teachers Begin To Use Their Muscle

Hard hit by inflation following World War II, American teachers began flexing their organized muscles. "Teachers all over the United States are thinking about striking," progressive education leader George S. Counts told a Phi Delta Kappa seminar in 1947. He was not exaggerating. More than 100 strike threats were carried out from 1942 through 1959. These strikes involved more than 20,000 teachers. Further, the strikes were carried out by teachers groups affiliated with labor, those affiliated with the NEA and the state associations, and those independent of both. The strikes occurred across the nation in both large and small districts, but they were mainly for one purpose: to obtain more money.

However, some of the strikes had other goals that, while secondary to salary gains, were becoming important. These included recognition of teachers groups as bargaining agents, stronger school personnel policies, and bigger school budgets.

The Norwalk, Connecticut, strike in 1946 is the first example in the nation's history of a teachers group walking out to achieve bargaining recognition. The teachers stayed out until the school board recognized the Norwalk Teachers Association as the sole bargaining agent for its members.

The Battle for Control of Teachers

By the late 1950s the potential in organizing teachers was clear to any who would see it. A variety of teachers, teacher-leaders, and unionists began to grasp the idea. Walter Reuther, leader of the Auto Workers, recognized this potential and began to finance teachers union organizing. Albert Shanker, an up-and-coming New York City teacher-leader, saw the opportunity for organizing as he moved toward the presidency of his union. A growing number of NEA leaders also recognized the direction teachers were going.

The New York City bargaining election of 1961 once and for all awoke teachers associations to the fact that militancy was in the cards for the American teacher—if the associations would not move into that future, teachers unions would.

In 1958, five New York City teachers groups had come together as the NEA Council. Two years later council leaders, along with representatives from four other teachers groups, asked NEA officials in Washington for help in developing collective bargaining. The NEA agreed to establish a regional office there, and on September 1, 1960, sent an assistant director of its membership division to the city with instructions to concentrate on service to city teachers.

Before the NEA had time to reorganize the city's teachers, however, the United Federation of Teachers played its first ace. The UFT called a strike on November 7. The strike, the union said, would win for teachers the right to bargain collectively. About 5,000 teachers stayed off the job for one day, and the union claimed it had won agreement from the Board of Education that an election would be held to choose a bargaining agent.

First, though, the board appointed a committee to study this question: "If collective bargaining is to be instituted for professional

persons in the school system, what would be its most appropriate form?" At public hearings held by the committee, NEA-affiliated groups opposed the idea of collective bargaining; the UFT spoke out strongly for it. In May, 1961, the committee issued a report calling for a referendum by city teachers to see if they wanted collective bargaining. In a June referendum the vote was 26,983 for bargaining and 8,871 against.

When teachers returned to school in the fall of 1961, both groups began to gird for the inevitable battle. The UFT had the advantage and never lost it. It maintained unity throughout the campaign; it received at least \$100,000 in direct aid and loans from other unions, especially (thanks to Reuther) from the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO.

The NEA had no base to build on. To establish one, it combined the groups that had come to it a year earlier into a coalition of forces for collective bargaining. Called the Teachers Bargaining Organization (TBO) of New York City, it announced a few weeks later that it had established a bargaining committee in anticipation of winning the election.

Three organizations qualified for the ballot in December: the United Federation of Teachers, the NEA's Teachers Bargaining Organization, and the independent Teachers Union. The UFT received twice as many votes as did the TBO—20,045 to the NEA group's 9,770 (the Teachers Union got 2,575 votes). The UFT had won decisively and would from that time represent all of the city's teachers.

The union victory in New York City was probably the biggest single success in the history of teacher organizing in the United States. A lifesaver for the national union, the victory brought a huge increase in AFT membership, which stood at just 60,715 in the entire nation in 1961. It also spurred teachers unions in California, Colorado, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Detroit to new efforts. And the victory guaranteed continued financial support for the union from the AFL-CIO. It seemed to demonstrate to the nation that teachers were ready to "go union."

The greatest significance of the New York union victory probably was that it pushed the NEA and its state and local affiliates farther along a road they were already traveling. Even before it lost New York City, the NEA was developing guidelines for collective bar-

gaining by teachers. Though it labeled the process "professional negotiation" to avoid labor terminology, the association was moving inexorably toward full recognition of the need to bargain for teachers. Ten years after the New York City election the NEA and its affiliates were bargaining, union style, for many more teachers than was the American Federation of Teachers and its local unions.

Contract Bargaining Becomes the Rule

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s teachers strikes seemed the major indicator of teacher militancy. And there were many strikes. Thousands of teachers "hit the bricks" during this period. But more important, *hundreds of thousands* of teachers were being covered by bargained contracts that gave them, usually for the first time, written, detailed provisions for salary, fringe benefits, and instructional standards. As early as 1964 the NEA estimated that 100,000 teachers in 346 school districts were serving under written contracts. By 1967 nearly 400,000 school personnel were under bargained contracts in 1,179 districts where teachers were represented by NEA affiliates. An additional 35 school districts had AFT contracts.

Teachers were bargaining in a number of states under new laws lobbied through the legislatures by teachers associations. By 1965 laws mandating school board-teacher bargaining were in effect in Connecticut and Washington; in Michigan teachers were choosing bargaining agents under the state's labor laws. Alaska passed a teacher negotiation law in 1959, New Hampshire in 1955, and Wisconsin in 1962. By 1966 California, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Oregon had passed laws allowing teacher bargaining. The tide was irreversible.

By 1972 a total of 1,445,329 instructional personnel throughout the nation were covered by negotiated agreements.

Causes of Teacher Militancy

What brought about this huge rush to teacher bargaining, this massive increase in teacher militancy? I believe there were six major factors: a long history of economic injustice to teachers; growing professionalism as the teacher's role became more important in an increasingly complex society; growth in size and bureaucratization of the schools; changes in and among teachers organizations; growing availability of the mechanisms for militancy; and the changing social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1975 a newspaper reporter asked the NEA's executive director, Terry Herndon, why the NEA had "suddenly" become so militant. Herndon's answer was that the NEA is a very democratic organization. It elects new officers each year or so, its policies are set by an annual assembly of thousands of teacher representatives. Many teachers, Herndon said, were militant in the 1950s and perhaps even earlier. But the majority of NEA members remained unwilling to accept strikes, collective bargaining, political action, etc., so the association's posture remained a conservative one. Sometime around 1970, Herndon concluded, 51% of the association's members moved into the militant camp; in a democratic organization, this reflected a change in the image of the NEA.

However it is analyzed, teacher militancy had become a reality by the time of the nation's Bicentennial. Most teachers were now working in districts where they had the right to negotiate with their employers. Most teachers were members of the NEA or of the AFT; 1974 figures showed that 72.4% of all teachers were organized; by 1976 this percentage probably exceeded 80, because the NEA and four state-level affiliates completed "unification" agreements in that period, thus mandating a larger NEA membership.

Further, teachers were expressing their militancy in other, newer ways. The most visible of these were 1) lawsuits brought by teachers organizations on behalf of their members' rights and 2) political action of organized teachers. The NEA, through its DuShane Fund, was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly to guarantee that teacher contracts would be honored, to insure that black and other minority members would be dealt with fairly, to protect women's rights, and to assure teachers the right to free speech, freedom of dress, even freedom of sexual preference. The AFT had a similar, though smaller, fund for such actions. On the political front, teachers organizations were contributing thousands of dollars to campaigns of congressmen and senators who were considered pro-education. Thousands of teachers were volunteering to work on behalf of these candidates, proving themselves to be a valuable asset to politicians. Through its monthly newspaper sent to 1.7 million members, the NEA was publishing voting records of every member of Congress on issues relating to education. And in 1976, for the first time, the NEA endorsed a candidate for President of the United States.

One further aspect of teacher militancy appeared in the 1970s—the willingness of the education associations to work directly with other groups, including labor unions. The chief example of this cooperation was the Coalition of American Public Employees, founded jointly by the NEA and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. The latter group, an AFL-CIO union led by Jerry Wurf, was a maverick in the house of labor and a long-time foe of AFT President Albert Shanker. Other public employee groups (nurses, doctors, IRS workers) also joined the coalition; statewide coalitions were formed by teachers and other unionists in a dozen or more states.

All of this militant action meant that most American teachers in the mid-1970s were organized, politically aware, and active.

Some observers have suggested that teacher militancy peaked at this point, and that teacher strikes, teacher bargaining, and teacher cooperation with other public employees could not go much further. There is evidence for such an argument. The downturns in the national economy in the 1970s moderated the money demands of many unions. Some state court decisions placed additional limits on the extent of teacher bargaining. A U.S. Supreme Court decision

in 1976 seemed to cut off the possibility of a nationwide bargaining law for teachers and other public employees. Bankrupt city governments were blocking gains by municipal unions. Declining school enrollment raised fears of massive losses of teacher jobs. It was a time to ask, Had the steam gone out of the drive for teacher militancy?

To consider this question, let us look briefly at 10 other questions reflecting issues that will determine the future of teacher militancy in the nation. These questions are:

1. What is the outlook for legislation that will impede or promote teacher militancy?
2. What impact are court decisions having on the drive of teachers to organize and bargain?
3. Will the public attitude toward the militant teacher hinder that militancy?
4. Will increasing conservatism of teachers themselves slow their militancy?
5. Will the American economy support continued teacher militancy?
6. How will changes in the way schools are financed affect teacher militancy?
7. Is the supply of teachers exceeding the demand, and if so, how will this affect teacher activism?
8. Will conflicts between teachers organizations limit their thrust toward greater power for their members?
9. Will educators who are now unorganized join teachers associations or unions?
10. Will teachers continue their efforts to influence society through political action?

Laws and Court Decisions

What is the outlook for legislation that will impede or promote teacher militancy?

What impact are court decisions having on the drive of teachers to organize and bargain?

These two questions are closely related and need to be dealt with together, because the essential mechanism of teacher activism—collective bargaining—is affected both by legislation and by court decisions.

In 1977 teachers had the right to bargain, and were bargaining in most states of the Union. But the extent and effectiveness of that bargaining varied from negotiations conducted completely in the absence of a law allowing or forbidding bargaining, to full-scale contract bargaining with the right to strike as the ultimate weapon in the hands of the teachers (or other public employees). Thirty states allowed teachers to bargain by law. Seven states—Alaska, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont—stood at the most permissive end of the 30, allowing their teachers to bargain and to strike either by statute or by court rulings that specified that school boards could not automatically get injunctions blocking teachers from striking. In three additional states—Michigan, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island—court decisions limited injunctions against striking teachers to such an extent that, in practice, strikes went unimpeded in most cases.

At the other end of the spectrum were the so-called right-to-work states, in which union organizing was discouraged by laws requiring open shops, i.e., laws forbidding exclusive representation of worker groups. Unions consider a closed shop essential to negotiating employee-employer contracts. In 1977 the Virginia courts, in an

action sought by Governor Mills E. Godwin, ruled that public employers in that state could not negotiate with their employees. This ruling for all practical purposes ended teacher-school board bargaining in the state.

Thus teachers and other public employees in the 50 states faced, in the 1970s, a variety of bargaining situations. NEA's chief counsel, Robert Chanin, called the situation "a patchwork quilt of state collective bargaining statutes ranging from fair to terrible." He added that "hundreds of thousands of teachers do not even have minimal collective bargaining rights."

Further, the U.S. Supreme Court itself had ruled in two cases that adversely affected teacher bargaining rights.

In a 6-3 decision in mid-1976, the Court ruled against teachers from Hortonville, Wisconsin, who argued that their school board, as a party to a contract dispute with them, could not then be an impartial determining agent in an action against them following the contract bargaining (the board had fired the teachers). A lower court agreed with the teachers ("It would seem essential, even in cases of undisputed or stipulated facts, that an impartial decision maker be charged with the responsibility of determining what action shall be taken"), but on appeal the Supreme Court disagreed, saying, "The sole issue in this case is whether the due process of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits this school board from making the decision to dismiss teachers admittedly engaged in a strike and persistently refusing to return to their duties."

The second U.S. Supreme Court ruling, also in 1976, indirectly but crucially affected teachers' bargaining rights. In *National League of Cities v. Usery* the Court held that the U.S. Congress had exceeded its authority under the commerce clause of the Constitution when it extended the wage and hours provision of a federal law to most employees of state and local governments. The Court opinion did not deal directly with collective bargaining, but the implication of the decision to many observers was that Congress would be unable to pass any constitutional legislation requiring states and communities to bargain with its teachers and other public employees. If this implication held, the "patchwork quilt" of state statutes would be the best teachers could hope for.

Neither of these Supreme Court decisions, however, may block teacher bargaining as much as at first appeared to be the case.

In its Hortonville decision, the Court did not speak to the essential issues raised by the teachers. Ruling on the narrow question of the school board's right under the Fourteenth Amendment (regarding due process), the Court left unsettled such issues as the right of teachers to binding arbitration, the constitutional differences between public employee-employer relationships and those of workers in private industry, or even the due-process rights of teachers a school board intends to fire. Thus, as one Court expert noted, the Hortonville decision "doesn't mean it's 'open season' on striking teachers."

The *National League of Cities* decision could be the more important of the two for teachers. The reason is that in the early 1970s the National Education Association decided that the most effective way to guarantee the bargaining rights of its members (and of all teachers and public employees) would be the passage of a federal collective bargaining statute. Such a law, if Congress passed it, would end the "patchwork quilt" of state statutes and strengthen teacher bargaining in states which had no bargaining law at all.

The NEA began pursuing several versions of a federal collective bargaining law in the years prior to the *National League of Cities* decision. The association proposed and offered its support both for separate legislation to set up a national public employee law and for changes in the National Labor Relations Act that would include public employees under its rules. Either approach would give teachers the same rights to bargain (and strike) that other workers already have. Neither approach succeeded in Congress before 1976, partly because Congress itself was awaiting the *National League of Cities* decision. And when that decision came, many in Congress and in education circles assumed that the decision killed chances for federal legislation in the area of public employee bargaining.

In 1977, though, the NEA revised its position. Further analysis of the Court decision convinced NEA lawyers that a federal collective bargaining law could survive constitutional challenge if the law were written in a way to avoid the limitations set by the Supreme Court in *National League of Cities*. The thinking went this way: The Court decision did not say that every intrusion of the Congress into state sovereignty was unconstitutional; it said only that such intrusion is invalid if it, "impairs the state's ability to function effectively within the federal system." In effect, the Court said that the amount of

intrusion of federal law into state and local dealings that could be allowed must be balanced against the federal interest that brought about the particular federal law that intrudes.

NEA lawyers believed that several changes in the association's proposed bargaining bill would tip the balance to constitutional acceptance. The most important of these changes dealt with the right to strike and the use of binding arbitration. The NEA proposal now did not call for an unlimited right of teachers to strike, on the theory that such an unrestricted right would, in effect, allow employees to bring a state or local operation to a complete halt and thus intrude into the state's or community's rights. Instead, the new NEA proposal suggested that the right-to-strike language of the federal legislation include a proviso expressly authorizing a state to prohibit or limit the right to strike by passing appropriate laws. In other words, teachers would have the right to strike, but if a state legislature considered this right unacceptable, it could pass a law "opting out" of this part of the federal collective bargaining law. Teachers and other public employees would still have the protection and rights under the federal law, but they could not strike in that state.

The use of binding arbitration, too, would be an option under the new NEA proposal. The difference was that it would become not an "opt out" condition, as with the strike, but an "opt in" choice for the state. That is, the NEA-proposed legislation would make fact-finding with nonbinding recommendations the final step in bargaining; each state would have the option, though, of enacting legislation making the recommendations binding if it wanted to.

The NEA-proposed legislation would, the association said, leave teachers with several possible bargaining structures. In Chanin's words: "At best, they could have the structure set forth in the current [old] NEA proposal—that is, nonbinding recommendations with the right to strike unless the teacher organization waives that right in order to secure a binding decision. At worst, they could have what is available under most of the current state public sector collective bargaining statutes—that is, nonbinding recommendations with a strike prohibition."

To some, the new NEA proposal seemed too weak. AFT President Albert Shanker attacked it as "harmful to all employees, public and private, since it could set precedents for similar states' rights proposals for the private sector." The AFT said it would continue to

demand a law giving teachers full bargaining rights, including the complete right to strike. The NEA counterattacked, pointing out that such a position was "self-defeating," since it would lead to the constitutional problems made clear in *National League of Cities*. NEA officials also said they doubted the AFT's sincerity; they suggested that the AFT would be the loser if any federal collective bargaining law passed Congress, because guarantees of bargaining rights for teachers would mean an end to AFT locals in communities where they had the minority of membership (a frequent condition). When California's strong bargaining law passed in 1976, for example, NEA-California Teachers Association locals won the vast majority of bargaining elections and, under the exclusive representation rules of the law, cut heavily into AFT strength. A federal law, NEA officials believed, would bring about a national situation of the same order.

So the answer to our two-pronged question—How will legislation and court decisions affect teacher militancy?—may lie in the answer to a single question: Will the Congress pass a constitutionally acceptable collective bargaining law for teachers and other public employees?

If such a law passes, the course of teacher (and public employee) bargaining will change greatly. If such a law is not passed, however, teachers groups will have to fall back on state legislation—not a happy prospect for them perhaps, but not a hopeless one either. As we have noted, 30 states have bargaining laws of some sort already. Ten states allow strikes by teachers. In several other states, teachers' proposals for bargaining laws are under consideration; the Kentucky Educational Association, for example, has as a major ingredient of its legislative package for the 1978 state assembly "a law to guarantee local education associations a formal procedure for negotiating with local boards of education."

In sum, a federal law that meets the Supreme Court's tests would greatly enhance teachers' opportunities for militancy, but failure to obtain that law is not likely to halt teachers' drives for bargaining rights.

Teachers and the Public

Will the public attitude toward the militant teacher hinder that militancy?

"Public Workers and Public on a Collision Course," *U.S. News & World Report* headlined in 1977. The article under the headline predicted that school would become a "major battleground as teachers unions grow stronger and try to protect their members' jobs in the face of dwindling classroom enrollments."

U.S. News identified the major conflict as that between hard-pressed local taxpayers and the financial demands of teachers. But the issue is more subtle. What is involved is not just money—money that admittedly must come from the taxpayer—but power. Perhaps the major cause of teacher strikes, for example, has been the desire of teachers to be recognized—to gain a place at society's bargaining table. Not that teachers will not use that position to press for higher salaries; certainly they have sought and likely will continue to seek a piece of the economic pie they have long been denied. But for teachers the point of organizing—forming unions—has been to force society to recognize them as first-class citizens. In the words of one teacher who struck in 1977, "We strikers are much more hungry for rights than we are for food. You can fill your stomach, but if in your soul, heart, and mind you're not at peace with what you believe, it's a much worse kind of hunger."

To feed this hunger, communities have to recognize teachers and their organizations as co-equal members of the local power circle. And it is at this point that resistance can build. Sometimes this resistance is expressed in rejected school levies, at other times in refusals to bargain with teachers.

The question is, Will this resistance increase?

Officials of teachers organizations in the late 1970s seemed convinced that the long-term battle for teacher acceptance was being won. AFT President Shanker, for instance, said in early 1977 that reports of school levy rejections should not be taken as dire omens. He suggested that these "no" votes were not necessarily aimed at teachers (and other public employees) but at "government in general"—as the only way citizens had to vent their anger at "the system." Shanker also suggested that teachers and other public employees would win public acceptance by effective political action and by involving themselves in "broad economic issues."

NEA leaders, by their actions in the 1970s, seemed to agree with the idea that broader involvement of teachers and their organizations in societal issues was both a need felt by teachers and an important way to help teachers express their concerns. The NEA greatly expanded its role in political action, its involvement in "noneducational" social issues, and its relationship with other public employees of the nation.

It is important to note that this rapid expansion of political action by teachers—endorsement of candidates, contributions to campaign funds, direct work on behalf of candidates—apparently did not affect the way the American public viewed the teacher. Gallup polls continued to show that the public rated teachers (and schools in general) high on their approval list. Lawyers, politicians, big businessmen, and big labor leaders dropped in public favor according to such polls, but professors and teachers remained near the top of "approved" groups. Few in the public were quoted as objecting to teacher involvement in broader, noneducational issues, either. Though many a city power broker may have wished that "teacher do-gooders" would stay out of things, few of these opinion leaders expressed this view publicly, and there was evidence that some of them even welcomed teacher involvement.

But what of a reported conservatism among the American people? By the late 1970s, observers were noting that the U.S. population's median age was rising and would be in the high twenties by the end of the century. Wouldn't this older population object to the demands of a militant teaching group? Several critical responses need be made to this question. One is to point out that, even assuming a correlation between age and conservatism, the American population had not been "young" and was not suddenly

turning "old." Despite the cover stories in *Time*, the American median age had not fallen below 25 in the post-World War II years; the median age of the nation's population was much lower at the turn of the century, or in Thomas Jefferson's day, than in the middle of the twentieth century. Second, one needs to look at what is meant by conservatism. Even if the American population is becoming older and more conservative, we need to recall that "conservative" in 1990 might not be "conservative" by earlier standards. A conservative American in the 1920s might well have, and probably did, oppose Social Security, unions, and the expression of rights by minorities. What teachers groups were aiming for in the 1970s and will likely be working for during the rest of the century are such things as the right to bargain, the freedom to participate in politics, a voice in determining the working conditions and programs of their work situation. These are hardly ultraliberal goals; they are in fact the same goals already won by many other segments of society. It is by no means a certainty that even a more conservative population would object to them.

But the more basic answer to the question of whether the public's attitude will block teacher militancy may be that the public will have no choice.

In the 1970s teachers and other public employees began to work together. The NEA joined with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFL-CIO) to form the Coalition of American Public Employees. The AFL-CIO itself established a Public Employee Department in 1974. By throwing their lot in with other public employees, teachers joined (some said *led*) a movement with considerable power. It is likely that the public has yet to feel the full force of that combined power. Labor columnist Victor Riesel expressed this idea in a 1975 article when he pointed out that "until garbage rots for two weeks on some city's streets, or the police pull some job action, or firefighters strike again as they have not too long ago, or teachers walk out again and again, the public won't realize the significance of the new era." In another article Riesel was more blunt: "... the public's seen nothing yet."

So the public may have no choice. Public employee groups are organizing and expanding far more rapidly than private sector labor. In Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, for instance, more than half of all state and local employees were organized by 1975.

The Coalition of American Public Employees, joined by nurses, some doctors, and others after its founding, was a potential spokesperson for nearly 14 million workers. An organized force of this size might not win enthusiastic support from the public, but it certainly would be able to demand respect.

Teacher Conservatism

Will increasing conservatism of teachers themselves slow their militancy?

If a conservative public-at-large does not slow teachers' militant actions, might the educators themselves edge toward conservatism and moderate their activism?

In the late 1970s the signs were mixed. Some trends seemed to indicate growing teacher conservatism; others tended toward a firm militancy.

At least four situations suggested growing teacher conservatism:

1. Starting early in the 1970s some teachers began joining the National Association of Professional Educators (NAPE) and its state and local affiliates. Led by Los Angeles educator Richard Mason, NAPE held annual meetings, collected dues, and generally ran a road show proclaiming the dangers of the teacher unionism displayed by the NEA and the AFT. NAPE leaders railed against collective bargaining, exclusive-agent contracts, big organizations, big government, etc. NAPE claimed adherents in dozens of states, but they could be found in significant numbers mostly in California, Texas, and parts of the South.

How many NAPE members were there? Despite claims by Mason that 40,000 educators "support NAPE," probably fewer than 10,000 teachers in the entire nation paid dues to NAPE or NAPE-like groups. Even in Los Angeles, birthplace of NAPE, its weakness was demonstrated in early 1977. Under the new California bargaining law, an exclusive agent was selected in Los Angeles by vote of the teachers. NAPE's loosely connected affiliate, the Professional Educators of Los Angeles (PELA), ran a far second to the merged NEA-AFT local, UTLA, which received 12,882 to PELA's 3,755, a number approximately

matching its membership figure. In one California election (a 39-member unit in Imperial County), a NAPE group won a bargaining election. It was the only NAPE victory in the state.

To some observers it seemed ironic that a NAPE group would even be on the ballot in a bargaining election, because of NAPE's philosophy. PELA Business Manager John Harris explained, however, that had his group won the election, PELA would not have bargained as the exclusive agent for Los Angeles teachers but would have formed a joint bargaining front with UTLA and any other groups that got votes. "We're in favor of a collective bargaining contract," he said, "but we do oppose exclusivity and the agency shop."

2. After the NEA and its affiliates became politically active in the 1970s, some members objected to this political action. Under federal law the association had to reimburse thousands of members for the portion of their dues used for political action.

This membership protest apparently reflected two things. First, there was a philosophical difference between association-elected leaders and convention delegates (who tended to be politically liberal) and the NEA members at large (more than half of whom considered themselves politically moderate). Thus many members were objecting to what they saw as a difference in philosophy between their leaders and themselves. Second, given the closeness of the 1976 Presidential election, it is logical to assume that many association members voted for Gerald Ford. The NEA, through its Political Action Committee, had endorsed Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale, and the pro-Ford members were expressing their objection to this choice.

To analyze properly the meaning of this membership objection to the movement toward teacher militancy, it would be necessary to know how many members were objecting to *the process* and how many to *the choice of a candidate they did not approve*. If members were objecting to the idea of teachers being involved in politics at all, this would be a sign of conservatism moderating teacher militancy. If, however, the objections reflected approval of the process but objection to the choice that was made, then one could argue that teachers were solidly behind the idea of involvement in political life and were merely arguing over how to carry out this involvement.

3. In the 1970s the NEA completed the process it calls "unified

membership," which means that all members of education associations in the nation must either join their local, state, and national associations or join none. The result of this process was a larger NEA membership, and a membership with a broader base. As it happened, teachers in more conservative parts of the nation were among the last to unify with the NEA; this meant for the NEA a gain of members in states such as Texas and Arkansas. At nearly the same time that these members were joining the NEA roster, the national association severed its connections with the New York State United Teachers, a state affiliate it shared with the AFT. The NEA established a new state affiliate in New York, but the result of the split was to discontinue the NEA membership of thousands of New York City and other urban teachers.

These two actions together—a gain of members in Texas and Arkansas and a loss of members in New York—might result in a more conservative cast to the overall NEA membership.

4. Within the AFT, too, a moderating event occurred in the mid-1970s. The AFT's power base, the New York City members of the United Federation of Teachers, were devastated by the city's financial problems. More than 15,000 teachers lost their jobs in the city, and the prospect for their return was dim. The financial crunch in New York City also made it difficult for the union to press for gains. In fact, union leader Albert Shanker called for a moratorium on teacher bargaining, and accepted cuts in benefits for members in the city.

In a *Village Voice* interview, Shanker described the situation: "Back in the '60s anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 teachers a year left the school system, and not because of cuts. That no longer happens, because there's no place for them to go. But when there was a lot of turnover, the 10,000 or 20,000 teachers who replaced those who had gone acted just like them. They fell right into the old structure. . . . The only teachers who broke out of that tradition were a few extraordinarily brilliant, tough, rebellious people who organized their own structures. But now, for economic as well as educational reasons, it's time for large numbers of principals and teachers to reorganize what they're doing."

What does this mean to teacher militancy? If one accepts the theory that the AFT was the gnat that irritated the NEA into more militant actions (a theoretical bucket with many leaks, however),

then one could argue that the moderating of UFT-AFT militancy could lessen the drive of teachers not only within that union but throughout the nation.

Looking at the other side of the coin, there were also forces in the 1970s that seemed to be driving (or at least continuing) teachers down the path of militancy. Four of these were:

1. The Nixon-Ford years of recession and growing unemployment brought a great slowing in teacher turnover and mobility. In the 1960s, in a growing economy and with a rising school population, teachers who didn't like their situation often moved along to another school. Female teachers who got married quit their jobs to have children, confident that there would be plenty of jobs waiting for them when they returned to the classroom. By the 1970s this had changed. Teachers became loath to give up a position for fear another was not going to be available. Teachers delayed having families, or took maternity leave with a guarantee of reemployment.

This economic uncertainty—economic uncertainty in general—feeds militancy in that it causes most persons to feel the need for organizational strength. Teachers associations and unions had negotiated contracts that limited layoffs, added to job security, guaranteed placement on the basis of seniority, and gave other support to members who were now conscious of needing their jobs. Teachers recognized the advantages of having a good contract, and they knew that their organization got it for them and would maintain it. They stayed with their associations and unions and in so doing added to organizational strength.

2. In a number of states during the 1970s teachers won or expanded their right to bargain with school boards. Perhaps California is the clearest example.

Until 1976 California teachers had the Winton Act, which granted them a limited right to bargain with school boards. The Winton Act did not allow exclusive representation or agency shop, however, and it required teachers to form "bargaining councils" based on the numbers of teacher-members in the groups who contested for their loyalty. In some cities, this meant that a fractionated group of union members, association members, independent members, and higher education representatives had to sit down with school board representatives.

In 1976, however, mainly through the political strength of the

California Teachers Association, a new and effective teacher bargaining act became law. Teachers now were able to seek exclusive representation either through demonstration of overwhelming numbers and automatic designation as the bargaining agent or through bargaining elections. As a result of the new law, teachers in California were soon bargaining through single agents in nearly every district in the state. The CTA, which won well over 90% of the designations and elections, was developing a coordinated bargaining program, with the goal of strong contracts for every teacher in the state.

Effective bargaining of the California type obviously leads to solidarity among teachers and strengthens their opportunities for activism.

3. By the 1970s many of the new teachers coming into America's school systems were young people who assumed routinely that associations or unions would bargain for them. These young people had never known a time when bargaining did not exist, and they took for granted their right to be represented by an organization.

A student NEA officer in the late 1970s reported that she was surprised at the militant positions of her colleagues in graduate school. This 22-year-old teacher-to-be thought that her ideas favoring teacher bargaining, political action, etc., would be minority views in her graduate seminars. But after one discussion session, her class voted on such questions as, Should teachers strike? Should teachers take part in politics? To her surprise the majority of students voted with her in favor of these militant positions. Her story is the stronger because she is a Texan and the class vote was taken in Austin. Texas is not known for its teacher militancy.

If today's student teachers are militant, can tomorrow's teachers be any different?

4. Teachers were not alone in their organizational drives in the 1960s and 1970s. "White-collar" union membership grew steadily from 1960. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there was a growth from slightly more than two million to nearly six million in professionals joining unions between 1960 and 1974. These professionals included nurses, teachers, doctors, scientists, and engineers.

As recently as the 1950s teachers resisted joining organizations that looked like labor groups because, they maintained, it was "unprofessional" or "blue collar." Teaching had been a great

avenue of escape from the blue-collar world for several generations of Americans, and many teachers did not want to "regress." But when airplane pilots earning \$50,000 a year have a union, when young doctors are joining unions, when the American Medical Association favors collective bargaining for its members, and when thousands of professionals are recognizing that group action is needed in today's complex society, how can teachers feel second-class by joining too?

So teachers joined in huge numbers. NEA membership (1.8 million in 1976) doubled between the 1960s and 1970s; AFT membership climbed to a peak near 475,000 in 1976. These large numbers of organized teachers, a large percentage of them working under bargained contracts, suggest that unionism in its broadest sense was not a debatable topic as it had been 10 or 20 years earlier.

Teachers and the Economy

Will the American economy support continued teacher militancy?

Some observers have suggested that teachers will not be able to continue their push for higher salaries, smaller class sizes, and added benefits because the 1970s economy just will not bear it. They pointed to school levy losses, bankrupt school systems, and taxpayer resistance.

Several factors moderate this judgment, however. First, despite the funding problems of the schools, very few actually closed down. During the money-tight school year of 1976-77, for example, only a handful of school systems closed their doors because of money problems (several in Oregon, others in Connecticut and Ohio). The vast majority of the more than 16,000 school districts in the nation continued to operate. Second, there was no clear evidence that school closings (or other problems such as layoffs of teachers) diminished the efforts of teachers organizations. If anything, these problems may have reinforced organized efforts to increase school funding and to change structures rather than eliminate teacher jobs.

Further, any argument that recent economic slowdowns have tended to discourage teacher militancy would have to acknowledge the probability of a renewal of such militancy as the economy rebounds.

Cost problems of the schools, too, are affected by inflation, and this factor tends at times to distort the discussion. One observer, at Brandeis University, pointed out in 1977 that pundits who talk about school costs pricing people out of the market do not consider that school costs have not increased at a greater rate than other costs in our society. Although he was speaking of college costs, his argu-

ment could be extended to any school costs. He noted that in 1977 it cost \$5,491 for a year of studies at Brandeis. The cost was \$1,200 in 1949 and \$1,735 in 1957. Now compare new family car prices over the same period, he suggested. A standard Ford automobile cost \$1,346 in 1949, \$2,433 in 1957, and \$6,300 (with most of the options people want) in 1977. His conclusion was: "Can it be that [parents] would really rather have a Buick or a Ford than a quality education for their children?"

So perhaps the doomsday for educational costs did not arrive in 1977; perhaps the citizenry just hadn't adjusted to paying the "normal" inflationary increase for schooling.

It may be less realistic to ask, Can the economy afford schools? than to ask, How shall school funding change?

Federal School Financing

How will changes in the way schools are financed affect teacher militancy?

Two general trends in school finance were visible in the 1970s: a move, often inspired by court decisions, toward greater equalization of school costs within states; and a move toward more federal financial support of schools.

These trends have been heavily documented and extensively discussed, so we shall merely summarize them here. The movement toward equalization was brought about mainly by two circumstances. First, a number of states had budget surpluses in the early 1970s; they used these surpluses to improve their plans for providing additional school funds to less financially able communities. Second, court decisions typified by the *Serrano II* decision in California held that it was unfair for students in poorer communities to receive an inferior education just because the municipality in which they lived could not afford a good school program.

Federal support of public schools increased more than fivefold from 1961 to 1974 (from less than \$760 million yearly to more than \$4.2 billion). The preponderance of that federal aid went to educationally deprived children, to federally impacted school districts, and to vocational training.

It is important to note that these changes in school financing—both the state equalization and added federal aid—mainly benefited the poorer school districts.

It is likely that both trends will continue in the near future. Court decisions now on record should keep the pressure on for equalization. Certainly, the local property tax payer will be pushing for added state and federal aid. And the organized teachers of the nation have

made it clear that their unions and associations will continue to push for more federal aid.

The question is, What effect are these trends having on the activism of teachers? The broad answer to this question seems to be that these trends are abetting teacher militancy. It seems, in general, that the farther from the locality the schools are financed, the better off teachers are.

The reasons for this are several. For one thing, the poorer the school district, the harder it is for teachers to negotiate salary gains and improved conditions. If the community is truly impoverished and aid is not forthcoming from the state or the federal government, the teachers are faced with a much more difficult task at the bargaining table. On the other hand, if state and federal monies are pouring into the district, teachers are bargaining from the start for a piece of a bigger pie. Further, when educational costs are relatively even throughout a state, teachers can organize and bargain for similar benefits throughout the state. In the 1970s such so-called coordinated bargaining became a reality in several Western states.

We could test our theory here by asking, If teachers gain more via school financing farther from the local community, how would teachers fare if *all* the school bills were paid by the farthest of sources—the federal government? An example of a modern industrialized nation where such a situation exists is France in the 1970s. There, teachers, well organized through the Federation de l'Education Nationale, have done very well. Because education is financed almost completely from a federal budget in France, the lack of city funds has not affected school budgets and the teachers have gained thereby. In contrast to other European countries (and the United States), teacher unemployment in France in 1976 was less than 1%, considerably lower than in neighboring countries where more traditional financing schemes were prevalent. Able to influence the national bodies that make educational decisions, French teachers negotiated reductions in class size each time the number of students in the school system declined.

This fact brings us to our next issue—the effect of a declining pupil population.

More Teachers, Fewer Students?

Is the supply of teachers exceeding the demand, and if so, how will this affect teacher activism?

The answer to the first part of this question is rather clearly yes. Enrollments in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools peaked in 1970-71 (at about 51 million pupils) and began to decline after that. The National Center for Education Statistics has predicted that the downward trend in enrollments will continue and level off at about 44.5 million pupils in the 1982-83 school year. During the same years, according to the U.S. Office of Education, the excess of teachers will range up to nearly 150,000 a year. (The figure will be lower if teacher turnover should be high.)

Instances of excess teachers were easy to find in the 1970s. New York City cut its teaching force by some 15,000; Chicago froze teacher hiring. The NEA estimated that, at the beginning of the 1975 school year, 200,000 qualified teachers were looking in vain for teaching jobs, although some 300,000 had left teaching for other work.

There were some countering trends. It was probable, for instance, that the greatest drop in teaching jobs had already occurred in the mid-1970s and that future declines would be less extensive. Further, the situation could turn around by the early or mid-1980s. Projections of school populations are based in large part on the declining birth rate—in 1976 American women were having an average of only 1.8 children each, a substantial drop from the 3.5 just after World War II. Some demographers have predicted a reversal in this trend, with a baby boom coming in the 1980s when women who have delayed bearing children begin to catch up. (Bureau of the Census officials have pointed out, however, that

women in their thirties do not have large numbers of babies, for a variety of reasons, regardless of their desire to do so.)

A change in the ratio of teachers to pupils would of course vastly change the oversupply picture. NEA researchers pointed out in the mid-1970s that if class size were reduced to the levels of the NEA's recommendations there would be an instant shortage of some 500,000 teachers in the nation's schools. Another factor that could help teacher employment is the requirement, encouraged by court suits and federal laws, that handicapped children be educated in public schools. And finally, Census Bureau officials have stated that the tight teacher-employment situation does encourage earlier teacher retirement and job changes.

Despite these countering trends, it was the consensus of observers that the combination of fewer pupils and plenty of teachers meant a continuing oversupply of teachers, at least until 1982-83.

The question is, How will this oversupply affect the militancy of teachers?

At first blush, it might seem that an oversupply of teachers would curtail militancy. Fewer teachers in total number, for instance, means fewer members for teachers associations, and thus a smaller budget for these unions and associations. Further, with teacher demand low, it is logical to assume that teachers will be more timid about risking their jobs in militant actions. But these first assumptions do not seem to hold up. The smaller number of teachers, with their jobs threatened, apparently tend to join unions and associations to help guarantee job security. This is the "adversity brings cohesion" factor we have mentioned before. (One example of this cohesion is the effect the shortage of jobs for Ph.D.s has had: In 1977 Ph.D. holders were considering forming a union to lobby for themselves.) As to timidity, there were more than 50 teacher strikes in the opening days of the 1975-76 school year—a year of severe teacher oversupply. Although this number was down from some earlier years, apparently the threat to teacher jobs had not reached a level sufficient to wipe out the drive of teachers for rights and benefits.

In sum, the softening of the job market for teachers probably has not significantly affected the militancy of teachers. If teachers remained well organized, they were likely to remain activists.

Teachers Organizations

Will conflicts between teachers organizations limit their thrust toward greater power for their members?

First of all, we should lay to rest the hope of some conservatives that the NEA and the AFT will fade away. This was very unlikely in the 1970s. NEA membership grew from about 714,000 in 1960 to 1.8 million in 1976; AFT membership went from some 60,000 in 1960 to 475,000 in 1976. Although about 200,000 of these were joint members of the NEA and the AFT in 1976, the total number of organized teachers that year exceeded two million. There were few indications of any diminution in those numbers. The NEA's unification program (requiring local, state, and national membership) had locked in most organized teachers outside of some major cities; and in those cities (e.g., New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia) the AFT held its members.

During the 1976-77 school year, NEA-AFT conflicts in New York, Florida, and California changed the complexion of organized teacher membership to some degree. The NEA, having disaffiliated the New York State United Teachers, lost most of its members in New York state, though it retained some 30,000. The AFT lost at least 40,000 members through New York City layoffs and the decision of thousands of teachers to join the new NEA affiliate, the New York Educators Association. In Florida, the NEA and the AFT had split the state, but between them continued to enroll most Florida teachers. In California, because of the success of the NEA-California Teachers Association in winning representation rights under a new state bargaining law, AFT membership was down. But these changes in the complexion of teacher membership did not substantially change the numbers of teachers who were organized.

The NEA-AFT conflict continued into 1977, and there were few if any indications that it would die down later in the decade. In addition to the New York, Florida, and California disputes, the two organizations were head to head on such issues as a federal collective bargaining law especially designed for teachers (the NEA for it, the AFT against it); affiliation of teachers with the AFL-CIO (the NEA against, the AFT maintaining that it helps teachers to be part of a labor organization); and cooperation with other public employees (the AFT charging that the NEA's relationships with public employee unions was divisive because the NEA was "not in the mainstream" of American labor).

Merger between the two organizations was not under active consideration in 1977; both groups seemed content to go their separate ways. NEA officials were confident that their much larger numbers, combined with their working relationships with other public employees, would ultimately yield the greater benefits for teachers. AFT officials remained adamant about labor affiliation; AFT President Shanker was a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. Further, the AFT had other matters on its hands, the financial crisis in New York City being one of the most urgent.

Anti-teacher organization people could hope for, at the most, a weakening of the AFT. But even this was a two-edged sword. The *American School Board Journal* noted this fact in a 1977 article warning its members not to celebrate the declining fortunes of the United Federation of Teachers (the AFT's New York City flagship affiliate). Said the *Journal*: "The UFT's parent union, the AFT, is locked in mortal combat with the far more lethal NEA. If the UFT crisis cripples its parent union severely enough, the NEA could gain an irreparable advantage. So, before giving ourselves up to indecent pleasure, we might consider this: The more the AFT withers, the more the NEA flourishes, and nonaligned teachers will find it harder than ever to remain independent."

It seemed likely as of 1977, then, that teachers organizations would grow stronger and continue to press their members' demands in the face of the dwindling classroom enrollments.

Organizing the Unorganized

Will educators who are now unorganized join teachers associations or unions?

Not only were teachers organizations likely to continue to wield their strength, they were, in the 1970s, looking to the unorganized members of the education world in the search for even more members. Among the groups wooed were professors, teacher aides and paraprofessionals, parochial school teachers, and retired teachers.

Of the efforts to organize the unorganized, the greatest push in the 1970s was toward recruiting college faculty. By the end of 1976 more than 100,000 of the nation's 600,000 professors were members of bargaining groups. NEA affiliates alone had contracts covering some 80,000 faculty. The AFT, too, was coming on strong on campuses. And the American Association of University Professors finally, in the 1970s, gave in to the pressure to establish bargaining units; it represented some 20,000 faculty members under contract by 1977. (The NEA attempted to co-opt the AAUP contracts by offering a merger plan that would provide NEA expertise in bargaining to AAUP members, with dues going to both organizations, but as of mid-1977 the AAUP had not taken the bait.)

Faculty organizing proceeded at a sluggish pace during the early 1970s, but economic pressures on colleges (where the loss of students was soon to hit), combined with NEA and AFT needs for more members, might bring a speeding of campus recruitment by the 1980s. Several observers believed that college faculties were ripe for organizing; Ford Foundation official Fred Crossland predicted in 1976 that "in the not too distant future, faculty unionization and collective bargaining will be the national norm."

Paraprofessionals—teacher aides, school secretaries, and others—were being pursued by the AFT and the NEA (and also by the AFL-CIO American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) in the 1970s. The AFT has several strong paraprofessional union affiliates. In 1977 the NEA made proposals to bring these aides into full association membership. The NEA also negotiated jurisdictional agreements with AFSCME to avoid conflict with a union that was a founding member, along with the NEA, of the Coalition of American Public Employees.

The AFT was working throughout the 1970s to organize teachers in Catholic schools, mainly in the large cities. Organizing these teachers was a slow process, however, hampered by court actions at times, for the courts ruled that separation of church and state meant that these teachers could not choose a union to represent them. The AFT pressed on, however, and in 1977 called a walkout by lay teachers in the Catholic secondary schools in the Los Angeles area as part of its efforts to get church officials to accept an AFT local as a bargaining agent.

Organizing retired teachers was under consideration by the NEA in the late 1970s. The association had once retained a percentage of its teachers who retired through life membership and through a relationship with the National Retired Teachers Association; but in recent years that effort lagged as life memberships were discontinued and NRTA became independent. Whether large numbers of retired teachers could be lured back into the NEA fold was an unsettled question.

If any of these groups—professors, paraprofessionals, parochial school teachers, or retired teachers—could be added to NEA or AFT rolls, however, they could bring added growth to organizations that had already recruited nearly all of the nation's regular public elementary and secondary school teachers.

Political Action by Teachers

Will teachers continue their efforts to influence society through political action?

Of all the questions we have raised, this one has perhaps the clearest answer, for teachers groups seem fully committed to continued political action.

Organized teachers jumped deeply into the political pond in the 1970s, and they loved it. During the 1974 congressional campaign, the NEA and its affiliates contributed an estimated \$2.5 million toward electing "friends of education"; the AFT added another \$1 million. Teachers groups found that politicians were as eager for teacher volunteer workers as for their dollars, so when federal election laws began limiting the amounts of contributions they could make, the NEA and the AFT were not discomfited—they found just as much success through the use of smaller, carefully placed contributions combined with volunteer efforts and well-publicized endorsements as was gained through larger donations.

In the 1976 campaign, the NEA endorsed a Presidential candidate (Jimmy Carter) for the first time in its history. It supported candidates, too, in hundreds of Congressional races, and scored a high percentage of wins for those it backed.

NEA state affiliates, too, were turning to political action in the 1970s. The California Teachers Association waded into political action so extensively that one state assemblyman, speaking of the CTA's political clout, told the *Sacramento Bee* that "There are only three things I fear—God, my redheaded wife, and the CTA."

Led by UFT President Shanker, a man who made New York City politics his union's agenda, the AFT, too, continued its political action programs. Thus there seemed in the 1970s little reason to

expect a lessening of teachers groups' political efforts. NEA Executive Director Terry Herndon made this position clear in a Washington Press Club statement in 1975. In careful phrases he said, "We perceive an absolute need and responsibility to exert maximum influence on the political system."

The Future of Teacher Power

Looking back over the 10 questions we have raised about teacher power, we can see that some questions are more important than others—more crucial to our understanding of teacher militancy.

For example, the first question—about the potency of laws allowing teachers to bargain—offers an excellent index to the movement of teacher activism in the future. For should a federal collective bargaining law for teachers be enacted, this factor alone could expand teacher militancy more than any other we have reviewed. Collective bargaining, the mechanism for teacher militancy, is the key to that militancy. Wishes without implementation are sterile; give more teachers the tools for bargaining and you provide the weapons they need for militancy.

Looking at the other side of the coin, however, it is not equally true that failure of teachers to get a federal bargaining law will greatly limit their militancy. After all, teachers have conducted strikes, statewide walkouts, political campaigns, court suits, and all the other manifestations of their militancy without a federal bargaining law. So, although the passage of such a law would greatly stimulate teacher militancy, its absence would merely divert that militancy to a state-by-state effort for bargaining rights.

Another measure of teacher militancy lies in the combined answers to the last three of our questions: How effectively will teachers groups continue their drives, organize the unorganized, and press their political efforts? Regardless of the unpredictable economy, the directions taken by the courts, and the ravages imposed by teacher oversupply, if teachers organizations remain effective, militancy is likely to continue. As we have seen, teachers began the march to militancy more than 100 years ago when they realized

that they had to organize—that there was a greater readiness by school boards to deal with *group* petitions.

American teachers to a large extent shed their modesty between 1945 and 1975. Many—perhaps most—have been willing to stand up and say, “As a professional in our society, I have a right to make reasonable demands on behalf of my economic status; further, as a professional I want the right to have a say in how the schools of our nation are run. I don’t think this is wrong; I think it is right and will help our schools do their job better.”

The answers to the 10 questions we have examined can help tell us what forces, if any, in our society would deny teachers these rights.

Some Books Dealing with the History and Directions of Teacher Militancy

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- Lynd, Robert S., and Merrell, Helen. *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929.
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